

A
D E F E N C E
OF THE *1016. L. 15*
DISSERTATION²
ON THE
E C L I P S E

MENTIONED BY

P H L E G O N:

Wherein is further shewn,

That that ECLIPSE had no Relation to the
DARKNESS which happened at our
SAVIOUR'S PASSION: And Mr.
WHISTON'S OBSERVATIONS are
particularly considered.

By ARTHUR ASHLEY SYKES, D. D.

K.

L O N D O N,

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P R E F A C E.

BEFORE I enter into a more particular vindication of what has been already said, concerning the eclipse mentioned by Phlegon; it may be necessary to say something in justification of my self for entering into this debate in the manner I have. I find that there are some, who, whatever their sentiments are as to the merits of the cause, yet they express a dislike, and disapprobation of this sort of enquiries. They think “that every
 “man is at liberty not to make use of
 “an Argument which he thinks incon-
 “clusive; but that he is not at liberty,
 “directly and openly, to contradict or
 “refute such arguments as others have
 “frequently insisted on, in behalf of
 “our common faith: That it would be
 “more proper for an enemy to point out
 “their insufficiency, than for a friend
 “to christianity to do it to their hands:
 “And that this is discovering a weakness,
 “which had better be concealed.”

This has been said upon this occasion; and admitting here the observation to be just, yet I must beg leave to put them in mind, how I was drawn into this debate. What passed betwixt the late Dr. Clarke and my self, in relation to this point, was in a private conversation; and it might for ever have continued private, had not Mr. Whiston in his late Memoirs, thought fit to treat this matter as he did: And whatever my sentiments were, I did not publish them to the world, till Mr. Whiston made it necessary in my own defence. Whatever therefore the fault is, I am certainly free from all imputation on this account; and if there be a fault at all, it must lie somewhere else.

And here, I think, I might rest secure, and appeal to every one's breast, how far, under these circumstances, I am blameworthy. I must only desire every one, before he passes a censure on my conduct, to read p. 148 of Mr. Whiston's Memoirs; and when he has read that, to say, whether I was not obliged to give my reasons why I persuaded Dr. Clarke

to leave out this passage of Phlegon? Whether, when the new edition of Dr. Clarke's Boyle's Lectures appear'd with so remarkable an alteration, I should not have been reproached for my advice? And whether, when I had been openly and publickly charg'd with offering to Dr. "Clarke a groundless suggestion;" with "going upon a supposal in a thing that "was capable of certainty; with "making "a pretended correction," and with such sort of public censures for what pass'd in private, — whether I should not have had all the crime I now have, and have been reproached with my silence too as an inability to justify what I had done?

But I am not willing to rest my defence upon this, how sufficient soever it may be, because I do not think that any personal provocation should make a man do what is not right or fit in it self. Upon a thorough examination of this point, I am convinced that this testimony of Phlegon has no relation to the darkness and earthquake at the passion: I cannot therefore but think, that to remove a false ar-
gument

gument in so important a cause, is doing a real service to christianity: 'Tis certainly removing an occasion of triumph out of the way of our adversaries; and 'tis taking away from them an opportunity of confuting what is brought as a principal confirmation of the truth. Look into our adversaries writings, and see what are the points they triumph chiefly in. Is it not upon the false topicks, which the defenders of our faith too often assert and maintain? Look into the writings of the Jews, or Mahometans: Is it not the idolatry, the forg'd miracles, the confessions, the absolutions, &c. among Christians, things that are set up instead of, and treated as, christianity, and things which they are able to confute,—are not these the things which they attack; and is not their visible success in these points, notwithstanding what such christians as defend them can say for themselves, the great reason why they continue unconverted? When our modern deists oppose revelation, do they not found the chief of their arguments upon the weak opinions that are too commonly

monly received? Do they not take for granted, that the sentiments of the divines which they quote are the sentiments of the scriptures themselves; and that by confuting the one, they effectually subvert the other? Take away therefore any groundless notion, that is urged by men of learning as an argument for christianity; and you do in fact a very great service to the cause of Christ.

But, 'tis said, "you expose a weakness which learned men have for many centuries maintained, and still maintain." And what harm can ensue, if you skew that any man, antient or modern, has been mistaken? Is it not done every day? Is it not removing a prejudice out of weak minds? And is it not a proper work for any man, and much more for a minister of the gospel, to refute any inveterate error, and especially such an error as has been made a support of the gospel truth? As a christian therefore, and as a divine, I think I have a right to speak against such notions, as I am fully persuaded to be false: And I cannot but conceive, in every light that I view it, that the best service that can be
done

done for christianity, next to the direct proving it to be true, (which I have elsewhere endeavoured to do) is to remove out of the way, whatever either can be proved to be false, or at best cannot be proved to be true.

But if an argument be weak and insufficient, "it should have been left to the adversaries of christianity to discover." This indeed might be the case, were it a mere contest for victory; but not if you have at heart truth, and That only: There cannot be a meaner part acted, than to defend an error as the support of truth, to the last extremity; and when it can be defended no longer, then to give it up with reluctance, and unwillingly: Nor is there any way to recommend a valuable truth so effectually, as to seek no false covers, and to use no false arts to vindicate it. Christianity stands in need of no such helps; but secure and safe in its own strength can never suffer, unless when the wisdom of Men presumes to be greater than the wisdom of God.



A
 D E F E N C E
 O F T H E
 DISSERTATION, &c.



WHEN I published my Dissertation on the eclipse mentioned by *Phlegon*, I declared, (and I did it with all the sincerity possible) that "I should not be
 " sorry to find my self confuted, because
 " I then should have this testimony to the
 " darkness at the passion unquestionable,
 " which I own'd, I did not conceive to have
 " any relation to the time of the cruci-
 " fixion of our Saviour." Mr. *Whiston* has
 since published a Pamphlet under this title,

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--- The

---- *The Testimony of Phlegon vindicated ;
 or, an account of the great darknefs and
 earthquake at our Saviour's passion described
 by Phlegon : including all the testimonies
 both Heathen and Christian in the very
 words of the original authors, during the
 first six centuries of Christianity, with pro-
 per observations on those testimonies. The
 public advertisements added, (I suppose by
 Mr. Whiston's order) that " all Dr. Sykes's
 " arguments to the contrary are fully con-
 " futed " in it. When I came to peruse
 this treatise, and found my name neither
 mentioned in the title page, nor once in
 the book itself; when I found not one ar-
 gument which I had urged in the Disserta-
 tion confuted; no comparing together what
 different authors had said, in order to fix
 the year in which *Phlegon's* eclipse happen-
 ed; no enquiry into the differences of the
 witnesses, nor any attempt to reconcile
 them; no entering into the probabilities of
 the account, or what should occasion such
 difference; no instance produced of a simi-
 lar manner of expression in any Heathen
 writer whatever, where an extraordinary
 darknefs was called an *eclipse of the sun*;
 no account of the universal silence in Greek
 and*

and *Latin* writers of that time about so remarkable an event; in short, no one thing done to remove or explain any one difficulty proposed; I could not but stand amazed at the publication of such an *advertisement*.

The Book therefore, neither removing any difficulties, nor proving what ought to have been expected from it, *viz.* that *Pblegon* had "described the great darkness and "earthquake at our Saviour's passion," I resolved at first to have left this matter entirely to the reader as it stood, and not to have given my self the trouble of taking any notice of it: nor should I have altered my mind, had not a Gentleman, (to whom I was a perfect stranger) obliged me with a much more exact and true calculation of the eclipse in debate, than that which I published from Mr. *Whiston's* authority.

The principal difficulty that I had in accounting for *Pblegon's* eclipse, was, that by Mr. *Whiston's* computation it was "total "and central" soon after "nine in the "morning;" whereas *Pblegon* had said, that it was dark at the *sixth hour*, i. e. at twelve

at noon. This was a material difference ; and I took for granted, that so *reputed* an astronomer as Mr. *Whiston*, could not have easily mistaken *three* or *four* hours in a computation of this kind. I imagined therefore the numbers in *Phlegon* rather to have been false, than Mr. *Whiston* to err ; and I concluded that we “ ought not to reject a “ certainty for so little an inaccuracy, as “ three or four hours, when all other cir- “ cumstances agreed so exactly.” But as I said, a Gentleman then unknown, sending me a calculation of this eclipse, which shewed the total darkness to be just as *Phlegon* said it was ; and immediately after, a second Gentleman, whose skill in astronomical computations no one can question, perusing this debate, and finding how much Mr. *Wh.* had mistaken this matter, he likewise unask’d sending me his calculation which varied from the former but a very few minutes ; I consulted a *third* person, whose authority alone will instantly silence all doubts in a thing of this nature, and whose consummate knowledge in geometry and astronomy the whole world acknowledges, the great Dr. *Halley*. Being thus fully confirmed in so important
a dif-

a discovery, I then determined to examine particularly what Mr. *Whiston* had published on this occasion ; and to print the calculation I received, that Truth might appear, and the world not be misled by a faulty computation published from one who may be thought more exact than he really is ; and that every one may judge of this fact.

Mr. *Wh.* has produced no less than twenty six testimonies, *Greek* and *Latin* ones, partly to vindicate *Pblegon's* testimony ; and partly to shew, what is not denied, or disputed, that there was a very great darkness and earthquake at our Saviour's passion. *Seventeen* of these neither directly nor indirectly mentioning *Pblegon*, or his testimony ; and *Eusebius* and *Jerom* being in effect the same evidence, the one being a professed translator of the other ; I am properly concerned with a very few out of all this pompous parade of "*original evidences* : " the point betwixt him and me being to be determined from what a few authors have said ; and these are such, (excepting those who lived later than the times to which I had confined my self) as I had considered and compared together in my Dissertation.

In

In general therefore, I must observe,
 1st, That Mr. *Wb.* talks much of "original testimonies," p. 3, 32, &c. without ever explaining or defining what he means by that expression. *Pblegon* is cited by *Origen*, *Africanus*, *Eusebius*, *Maximus*, *Jerom*, the *Chronicon Alexandrinum*, *Philoponus*, and *Malela*. And all of these likewise speak of the darkness at the passion. What reason can be given why *several* of these are cited as "original testimonies," to the darkness at the passion, and to *Pblegon's* authority, which will not equally prove every modern writer that has cited *Pblegon*, or has mentioned the darkness at the passion, to be an "original testimony?" He might as well have descended much lower, and have quoted *Vossius's* Harmony, and *Scaliger*, and *Petavius*, and Bishop *Mountague*, and *Huetius*, and *Grotius*, and *Basnage*, and *Tillemont*, and *Pagi*, and *Bayle*, and all the defenders of Christianity down to the present generation; and he might have given them all the name of "original evidences;" as well as he has given this name to so many writers who lived so many centuries after the fact. For why, e. g. is *Philoponus*, who lived 600 years after Christ, an "original evidence," more than

than *Grotius* who lived 1600 years after the fact. Or why is *Malela's* account more properly an "original testimony," than Archbishop *Usher's*, or any Chronologer's of the last century? Here therefore is a most gross imposition upon the reader, to call such testimonies "original", which were not wrote till very many years, nay some of them several centuries of years, after the facts happened; nay to call mere transcripts from one another, or the mere copyings of later writers out of preceding ones, by the names of "original testimonies." I must observe

2dly, That there is the very same abuse of another expression, viz. "authentic records" and "chronicles," p. 37. and "authentic accounts" *ibid.* An "authentic writing" signifies either an original, or else so faithful and exact and so well attested a transcript, that you cannot justly dispute its faithfulness. When 'tis applied to any record, 'tis called "authentic," in a looser sense, if you cannot reasonably reject its authority. In the present case; no body disputes whether *Phlegon* wrote of a certain eclipse of the sun, and of an earthquake that happened at *Nice*: and therefore *Phlegon's* words are an "authentic record" of such facts. But if the

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question

question be, whether *Pblegon* wrote concerning the darkness at our Saviour's passion, and that particular earthquake which then happened, it must not be taken for granted that he spoke of those things, but it must first be proved that he did speak of them, before his can be called an "authentic account" of them. The authenticity of an account is one thing; its relation to any certain point is quite another; and notwithstanding the one may be granted, the other may be denied. Sometimes *authentic* stands opposed to *spurious* or *forged*: And in this sense of the word, several of the testimonies here produced by Mr. *Wh.* may justly be denied to be "authentic accounts." Such are his *first*, his *third*, *fourth*, and *fifth*, his *ninth* and *tenth*, and his *twentieth* testimony. Eight therefore of the testimonies that cite or appeal to *Pblegon*, are nothing else but *Pblegon's* testimony eight times recited, and must stand or fall by what can be said about *Pblegon's* meaning; and consequently are not to be deem'd so many different witnesses in the present case: and *seven* more of these testimonies being *forgeries*, these likewise ought not to be looked upon as "authentic accounts." Add likewise to these,

these, that all who transcribe merely from preceding authors are in no sense "original testimonies;" and then out of Mr. *Wb's* whole account there will remain no more than the evangelists as true witnesses of the facts which happened at the passion; and these are such whose credit is not to be denied, and whose testimonies are properly "original" and "authentic"; and as to the debate about *Phlegon's* testimony it stands upon the probabilities on one side or other, what eclipse he was speaking about.

3dly, It is not enough in such a debate as this barely to set down what are here called "original testimonies;" but the *consistency* of the testimonies is to be considered; the words of every witness are to be examined; the probability or improbability of a story, and every circumstance of it is to be weighed. Suppose that an eclipse of the Sun were *now* to happen, total and central; and suppose that a peculiar and uncommon darkness were to attend it for two or three hours together: Every accurate Historian that should give an account of such an eclipse would certainly take notice of such a peculiar darkness, and mention whatever was particularly and emi-

nently remarkable. *E. g. Mezeray* in his history of *France*, speaking of a certain eclipse of the Sun, A. D. 1605, says ^a, "that it began
 " an hour after noon, on the 2^d of October,
 " and for *two hours it caused such a dark-*
 " *ness, that it seemed to have been night,*
 " the disc of that great luminary being hid
 " by the moon which appeared black, and
 " as it were border'd by a luminous circle
 " about it."

In like manner we may observe that *Phlegon*, like an exact Historian, took notice of the ^b *great darkness*, and of the *Stars appearing*, and of the *hour of the day*. Had now such an eclipse happened at the *full moon*, it is impossible for any one, much more for ^c *a very wise man*, or *an accurate chronologer*, to take notice of the eclipse at all, and not to take notice of that particular circumstance. 'Tis the *principal* point of view; and to omit that, is to omit the

^a Le deuxieme jour d'octobre. Elle commença a une heure après midy, & deux heures durant causa une telle obscurité, qu'il sembloit qu'il fust nuit, le disque de ce grand luminaire étant entierement caché par la lune qui paroissoit noire, & comme bordée d'un cercle lumineux tout autour. Mezeray. Hist. de France. Tom. 3. p. 1269.

^b Νῦν ὥρα εἰ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐγένετο, ὥστε καὶ ἀστέρας ἐν ἡραν φανῆναι. Phlegon.

^c ὁ σοφώτατος Φλέγων. Malela. Egregius Olympiadarum supputator. Hieronym.

chief, the *most remarkable*, the *very thing*, which an "exact man" ought to take notice of. So that *Phlegon's* omission of such a circumstance is a very strong argument, that he was not speaking of an eclipse at the *full moon*. How absurd is it to imagine that an *accurate* man, curious in his accounts of what passed, should barely take notice of the *darkness* of an eclipse, and yet that he should not take any notice of the *duration* of the darkness for *three* hours; nor of its being at the *full moon*; nor in short of any thing preternatural, or more than ordinarily remarkable? A man so considerable for his abilities, and *accuracy* in writing, as to be deem'd the fittest person to be trusted by the ^d Emperor *Adrian* with the history which he had wrote of himself; and yet so *inaccurate* as to omit the only very remarkable circumstances in such events as he mentions, is highly improbable in itself.

Again, 4^{thly}, Mr. *Whiston* professes "to set down fairly the original testimonies" concerning the darkness which happened at

^d Famæ celebris Adrianus tam cupidus fuit, ut libros vitæ suæ scriptos a se libertis suis literatis dederit, jubens ut eos suis nominibus publicarent; nam Phlegontis libri Adriani esse dicuntur. *Spartianus* in Adriano. c. 16.

our Saviour's passion ; and amongst these he mentions *Pblegon*, and cites from other writers what is said about him, and from him, as if no doubt or question could be raised, in relation to what he intended to speak about. Now with what justice, or by what rules of reason does he cite this passage as an " original testimony" for a certain fact, when every one can see that *Pblegon's* words have no express and clear relation to that fact. Is there a word in it which mentions the passion of *Jesus* ; or the time of year when the eclipse happened, or its duration, or any one mark from whence one can be sure that he is speaking of an eclipse on the 3^d of *April* ? Or is it clear and certain, that *Pblegon* speaks of the 4th year of the 202^d Olympiad. Surely Mr. *Whiston* imagines it to be enough that *Eusebius*, or the unknown author of the *Chronicon Alexandrinum* say, that the eclipse happened in such a year, without any proof, without any authority : When he cannot but know that if *Eusebius*, and the *Chronicon* fix it to one year, other writers as positively and clearly fix it to other years : that if *Eusebius* places it in his *Chronicon* in a certain year, he has placed in the same year, facts which

which certainly and demonstrably happen'd many years before and after that year: That *Jerom* has been guilty of all the same absurdities that *Eusebius* has, and one more; viz. to place this fact under the 3^d year of the 202^d Olympiad, at the same time that he translates *Pblegon* as saying that his eclipse happened in the 4th year of that Olympiad: that other writers still say, that it happen'd in the 2^d year; and others, by necessary consequence assert that it happened in the *first* year; and others still that it did not happen in any year of that Olympiad at all. Is not this imposing on the reader a *dubious, uncertain*, testimony for a clear and express one? Or will not this manner of producing evidence prove any absurdity in history? If the bare assertion of any writer without the consideration of circumstances, or if the suitableness of his words to any fact be sufficient to determine that he is speaking of that fact without any evidence or probability that he is speaking of it, then, any thing, and every thing, may be proved to be true, because such sort of "original evidence", and such sort of "authentic records" may be produced for every falsehood whatever. Surely one ought
to

to know, what authority any writer is of; whether he speaks to the point or not; whether he expresses himself clearly or confusedly; whether what is said be possible, or probable only; whether he be not contradicted by any other authors; whether the story, or its circumstances be differently related by himself, or others; and if it be differently related, which account is most likely to be true. These and such like circumstances are all to be considered; or else under the pretence and name of "original evidence," and "authentic records," we may impose on the world the grossest forgeries and corruptions imaginable.

We have a manifest instance of this in the book before us. The very first authority, or "original evidence" produced by Mr. *Whiston* to shew, that there *in fact* was an eclipse of the Sun at the passion of our Saviour, is taken from the *Testament of Levi*. The Patriarch *Levi* died, (and this is taken for granted to be his genuine dying speech,) He died about 1600 years, or as Mr. *Wh.* says about 1700 years, before Christ. This evidence is produced in proof that there *was to be* an eclipse of the Sun ^e *at*

^e ἐπὶ τῷ πάθει τοῦ ὑψίστου.

the

the death of the most High. However because this evidence should have some influence and effect, Mr. *Whiston* is willing to "consider this witness as no earlier than "the *second century*, long before *Origen*," i. e. he considers him historically as attesting a past fact, rather than foretelling a future one. He "waves the consideration of the "great antiquity, and of the *sacred authority*" of this book, p. 29. and only argues from its being in the world "long "before *Origen*."

Here then we have what is called an "original evidence", taken out of a book said to be written 1600, or "1700 years before Christ," p. 3. But is this account sufficient to satisfy any one? If it be ask'd, how Mr. *Wh.* knows that this book was wrote "1700 years before Christ" --- no evidence can be produced, unless you'll be contented with its name and title, and will believe it "of *sacred authority*," *antient* and *genuine* from that. If one would be contented to abate 1800 years in its age, and ask only how he knows that it was wrote "long before *Origen*?" The only answer is--- That *Origen* quotes a book entitled, *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, and

cites

cites out of it, not any words, but *something that is like to something* that is in this book. It is *supposed*, but never *proved*, to have been wrote in *Hebrew* : the learned are not agreed whether it was wrote by a Jew, or a Christian ; or whether it was not at first wrote by a Jew, and afterwards very much interpolated by some Christian, or whether it were not wrote by a Jew converted to Christianity : Nor is it agreed whether it were in being before the end of the 2^d century : some plead for its being forged at the beginning of that century ; others are willing to suppose it as early as the first century : Dr. *Grabe* was willing to suppose it in being before Christ, and to have been one of the apocryphal books sent to *Ptolomy* by the Jews at the same time that their canonical books were sent him. In short, no one can pretend to say, when it was first wrote, or where, or by whom ; or even in what Language. And yet this is here cited, as an “ original testimony ” as an “ authentic record,” as an “ authentic account ” of a fact ; and it is asserted to have been in being “ 1700 years before Christ,” *p.* 3. But before this book can be admitted as an “ authentic record,” for any *certain fact*, one ought to know---
of

of what authority it is; when it first appeared in the world; whether it mentions *the fact* for which it is produced; and lastly, whether its author did not take his account from others. These things, at least, are to be prov'd; and when an author talks of its " sacred authority," one has a right to enquire, whether it be not a mere romance; whether it be not full of *whimsical stories*, and *nonsensical absurdities*;--- such are Angels appearing to women, when *their husbands accompanied with them*; and their bearing *Giants*, because the Egregori appeared to them as reaching up to heaven, &c;--- one has a right to ask how comes so remarkable a piece never to be heard of for 1800 years together;--- these and many more such sort of questions are to be resolved before it can be produced as " original evidence," or authentic record, or as containing *real prophecies* about the darkness at our Saviour's passion.

But imagine these and such like difficulties all surmounted; let us hear its evidence, f " Know ye therefore that the Lord

f Nūn ἂν γινώσχετε ὅτε ποιήσει κύριος κρίσιν ἐπὶ τὰς υἰὸς τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅτε τῶν πετρῶν σχιζομένων, καὶ τῆ ἡλίου σβεννυμένου, καὶ τῶν ὑδάτων ξερανομένων, καὶ τῆ πυρός καταπτήσουσας, καὶ πάσης κτίσεως κλοισμένης, καὶ τῶν ἀοράτων πνευμάτων τηκομένων, καὶ ἡ δὲ σκυλευομένου, ἐπὶ τῷ πάθει τοῦ υἱοῦ, οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἀπιστῶντες ἐπιμένοντες τῇ ἀδικίᾳ. Testam. Levi.

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" will

“ will execute judgment upon the sons of
 “ men, who when the *rocks shall be rent*,
 “ and the *Sun be put out*, and the waters
 “ *dried up*, and the fire shall make a
 “ trembling, and the whole creation shall
 “ be disordered, and the invisible spirits
 “ shall melt away, and the invisible world
 “ shall be despoiled, *at the passion of the*
 “ *most high*, will yet be incredulous, and
 “ continue in their unrighteous actions.”

A man that makes no difficulty about
 the expression---*at the passion of the most*
high--- may very reasonably ask, whether
 at the death of Christ the *waters* were in
 fact *dried up*; and did the *fire tremble*;
 and was “*the sun extinguished*,” or, *put out*?
 Is the sun *put out* at any ordinary, or even
 at an extraordinary, eclipse? Or is a candle
extinguished, when any thing is placed betwixt
 the eye and that, which obstructs its light?
 If nothing of this happened at that time,--
 what will become of this *prophecy*? Or if
 it be said to be a sort of prophetic lan-
 guage, and to be fulfilled in the sense it
 was intended, one may ask how it was
 that it was fulfilled? how is it that no
 writer ever mentions what would probably
 answer to these high words? One might
 ask

ask whether it be the language of the *true*, *genuine* sacred writers, to say the sun was *extinguished* at the time of our Saviour's passion? If the *Rocks* were *rent* literally, why were not the *Waters* to be *dried up* literally, and the *Sun* to be *put out* literally? But this sort of writers generally *overact* their parts; and not content with the language of undoubted sacred persons, they betray the cause they would support, and destroy that faith they intend to promote.

Mr. *Whiston's* second observation relates to the testimony of *Africanus*. *Africanus's* words are, “ & *Phlegon* relates, that under “ *Tiberius Cæsar*, there was a complete e- “ *clipse of the Sun at the full moon*, from “ *the sixth till the ninth hour*.”

Upon this testimony (or “original evi- “ *dence*” who lived near 200 years after the fact) Mr. *Wh's* observation is --- “ In “ the testimony of *Phlegon* as given us from “ *Africanus* by *Syncellus*, I have put the “ words [*at the full moon*] and those other “ words, [*till the ninth hour*] into brack- “ *ets*: as *very probably* later interpolations, “ crept out of the margin into the text,

Φλέγον ἱστορεῖ ἐπὶ Τιβερίῳ Καίσαρι ὅτι πανσελήνη ἐκλείψει
ἢ λίαν γεγονέναι τελείαν ἀπὸ ὥρας ἑκτῆς μέχρις ὀκτῆς. Africanus
apud Syncellum.

“ and not the words of *Africanus* himself” p. 29.

When one comes to examine what are the grounds of this very great *probability*, and to ask, is there any variety of reading; any difference of copies; any author that quotes *Africanus* who leaves out these words; or has any like words in their places? The answer is, No. In truth, *Africanus* ought not to have put them in; and therefore Mr. *Whiston* would leave them out. For

“ We otherwise know,” says he, “ and that certainly, that *Africanus* was far from a credulous, or careless, or imposing writer: nay that he was the most learned, faithful, and accurate Chronologer of all antiquity.” *ibid.*

Yet as “ faithful and accurate” as *Africanus* was, 'tis evident in fact that these words are added to *Pblegon's* words. Nor is it enough to say, that “ very probably” these are “ later interpolations.” For 'tis certain, that this addition to *Pblegon's* testimony is as old as *Africanus's* time: and since we find it in fact in *Africanus*, whence so probably did it come as from *Africanus* himself? Mr. *Wh.* has not ventured to strike out as spurious, that part of the *Latin O-*
rigen,

rigen, where the wise men of this world expressly assert, that ^h Phlegon *did not inform us that the eclipse happened at the full moon*. How come the heathens by this objection, that *Phlegon* never said that his eclipse happened *at the full moon*? Some body or other must have asserted that this eclipse was *at the full moon*, and this made them so careful to contradict it. And whence so “probably,” as from this “most learned “chronologer of all antiquity,” in whose works ’tis expressly asserted of *Phlegon*? I know not very well how to account for it; but in fact the men of the *second* and *third* centuries had a scurvy trick of lying for God’s sake: and when one looks into the very long catalogue of books forged in those times, one cannot be too cautious in admitting what they say; notwithstanding there may be men credulous enough now, to maintain such forgeries to be *authentic records belonging to the Old and New Testament*. Mr. *Whiston* has no authority to strike out of *Africanus* those words, *at the full moon*; nor those other --- *till the ninth hour*:

^h Et Phlegon quidem in Chronicis suis scripsit in principatu Tiberii Cæsaris factum; sed non significavit in luna plena factum. Origen. in Matt. tract. 35^{us}.

and

and when writers are "driven to such distresses," as without any MSS, or any evidence, or any just reason, to strike out as spurious any passage; they become not editors but corruptors of authors; they are properly forgers, and are answerable to the world for such corruptions.

Mr. *Whiston's* third attempt is upon *Origen*, and 'tis very remarkable, that when he could not reply to the testimony, he sets aside as "spurious" a very long passage, without one MS. without the authority of any one writer, or without any one reason. Had he applied the same art to one single sentence more, and pronounced those words, " * *Phlegon* indeed has written in his *Chronicles*, that this eclipse happened under the government of *Tiberius Cæsar*; but he did not inform us that it happen'd at the full moon." Nay, if he had but pronounced the latter part of this sentence to be *spurious*, and the former part of it *out of place*; (and this would not have been the first instance, where dislocations have been thought of by Mr. *Whiston*, in

* Et *Phlegon* quidem in *Chronicis* suis scripsit in principatu *Tiberii Cæsaris* factum, sed non significavit in luna plena hoc factum.

order to account for a difficulty)---- How easy then would all be reconciled? Or since he was willing to set aside as *spurious* so very long a passage, why could he not have made the objection of the children of this world end with the question they propose.---
 “ * How could a fact so wonderful be
 “ passed over in such silence, as not to be
 “ mentioned by any Greek or Barbarian to
 “ have happened at that time? especially
 “ by those who have written Chronicles,
 “ and have taken notice when ever any
 “ thing new was observed? ”--- and then
 make *Origen* answer directly,---† “ *Phlegon*
 “ has not only written in his Chronicles
 “ that this eclipse happened under the go-
 “ vernment of *Tiberius Cæsar*, but also has
 “ informed us that it did happen at the full
 “ moon.” To justify this reading, the ex-
 press words of *Africanus*, and the *Chronicon*
Alexandrinum, and *Philoponus*, and *Maxi-*

* Quomodo hoc factum tam mirabile nemo Græcorum, nemo Barbarorum factum conscripsit in tempore illo? maxime qui Chronica conscripserunt, et notaverunt sicubi tale aliquid novum factum est aliquando, sed soli hoc scripserunt vestri autores?

† Et *Phlegon* quidem in Chronicis suis scripsit in principatu *Tiberii Cæsaris* factum, sed non [ac etiam] significavit in luna plena hoc factum.

mus, ("original evidences" all, and all positively concurring in the same testimony,) might have been produced to prove, and (when all the rest is struck out as spurious,) they would have proved that *Pblegon* did write that there was an eclipse *at the full moon* : and thus we should have had "authentic records" to prove that *Pblegon* did say in fact, what is now known that he never did design to say.

'Tis very remarkable then that Mr. *Whiston* begins his evidence, 1st, with a notorious forged book : In his second observation, he himself corrupts one single sentence of *Africanus* in two several places : and in his third observation, he sets aside as *spurious*, a very long passage of *Origen*, only because it contained in effect a demonstration, that *Pblegon's* eclipse had no relation to the darkness at our Saviour's passion. From such a beginning one may imagine what will be the end.

However, in order to shew what little grounds Mr. *Wh.* has for this proceeding, let it be observed, in general

1st, That *Origen* in his allowed genuine works, notwithstanding his profession that
he

he had ⁱ *done all he could*, yet cited *Phlegon* so *carelessly*, that he did not give himself the trouble of looking into him, or consulting his book. This appears from his not knowing certainly in what book of *Phlegon's* this eclipse was mentioned. "^k It " is" says he, " I SUPPOSE in the 13th book " of his chronicles."

2dly, All that he quotes *Phlegon* for in his allowed genuine works, is, ^l " That there " was an eclipse in *Tiberius Cæsar's* reign:" and he determines only, that " some time " in that reign *Jesus* was crucified;" and that this eclipse and earthquake happened " some time *about* the time of the passion " of *Jesus*." This is the whole of what *Origen* says in his *Greek* works: and consequently *Mr. Wh.* says more than his " original evidence" amounts to, when he says, that the " genuine *Origen* says the " darkness at our Saviour's passion was caused by an eclipse of the Sun." p. 30.

ⁱ Κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν. c. Cels. p. 96. The very same expression occurs in this Treatise upon *Matthew*. *In quantum mihi ex Deo est virtus.*

^k Ἐν τῷ τρικαιδικατῷ ΟΙΜΑΙ, τῶν χρονικῶν. c. Cels. p. 80.

^l Οὐ βασιλεύοντος καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἔοικεν ἐξανρθῆναι. ibid. περιτρεμέναι τὸν Φλέγοντα ἰσορήσαντα ΚΑΤΑ τὸν χρόνον τῆ πάσης τῆ Σωτῆρος ταῦτα ἀπητηκίναί. p. 96.

3dly, Mr. *Wh.* affirms, that “ the genuine
 “ *Origen* never confines either the great
 “ darkness, or the great earthquake to *Ju-*
 “ *dea.*” This I admit to be true : but the
 reason of it is, he never in his *Greek* works
 speaks a word about it, whether it was, or
 was not, confin’d to *Judea*.

4thly, He says, that the “ genuine and
 “ great *Origen* could not possibly be guilty
 “ of so gross an absurdity as once to sup-
 “ pose that by, *all the earth*, or, *all the*
 “ *land*, i. e. *πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν*, might be meant--
 “ the land of *Judea* only.” I reply, 1st,
 This is no absurdity. 2dly, the reasoning
 is good,--- that as certain of the facts which
 were done at the passion of Christ, were
 done no where but at *Jerusalem* where Je-
 sus was known ; so the other facts likewise
 may very reasonably be supposed to be done
 in *Jerusalem*, or *Judea* at furthest, where
 Christ lived, and preached, and was known,
 or heard of. Nor can any great use be con-
 ceiv’d of a miracle worked all over the world
 as an attestation of the mission of a person
 who was not then known, nor heard of,
 nor likely to be heard of for many years
 in many places ; nor in some places heard
 of in many centuries. 3dly, Supposing that
 in

in fact there was no *three hours darkness* all over the world, as it does not appear that there was, then the words--- *all the land*--- must be confined to *Judea* in this passage, tho' there were no other instance in the *New Testament* of the like use of those words. But 4thly, it is most probable, and I could produce very good criticks and interpreters of Scripture, antient as well as modern that maintain it, that by, *all the land*, or, *all the earth*, no more is intended than that country alone of which the author is speaking. But 'tis foreign to my purpose to enter into this point. ^m

5thly, 'Tis granted that the *Latin* works of *Origen*, in general, are not of equal value or authority with his *Greek* ones. We know, that his translator's ⁿ " have endeavored to remove whatever was *offensive* " in him; and took care that nothing " should appear discrepant from the re-

^m V. Le nouveau Testament de Beaufobre et L'enfant. Preface General. p. xx, xxi. Notes sur Luc. 2. 1. Idioma est sanctæ scripturæ ut omnem terram illius significet provinciæ de qua sermo est; quod quidam non intelligentes, ad omnium terrarum subversionem trahunt. *Hieron. in Esai. c. 13.*

ⁿ In quibus cum aliquanta offendicula inveniuntur in græco, ita elimavit omnia interpretando atque purgavit, ut nihil in illis quod a fide nostra discrepet, Latinus lector inveniat. *Pref. Ruffini in lib. περὶ ἀρχῶν Origen.*

“ceived faith.” But what then? Is there any evidence that the present part, where orthodoxy is not concerned, is spurious or corrupted? Or has this particular passage been ever objected to as “spurious” before now? In matters of heresy, or of private opinion, no doubt *Origen’s* books have been corrupted, and made to speak orthodoxy; and in *those cases* his *Latin* works are not of any great authority, nor much to be depended on. But what is that to the present point? St. *Jerom* puts this question, which I think very pertinent to the present case °: “If *one* book of *Origen’s* has been corrupted, are therefore *all* his works corrupted, which he published at different times and different places?”

Lastly, Since this long passage is pretended to be *spurious*, I cannot but ask, which is the most probable, whether he that forged it should forge it in favour of a common received opinion, and with the seeming concurring testimonies of *Origen’s* friend, *Africanus*, and other old writers; or that he should set down in *Origen’s* name a peculiar

° Si unus violatus est liber, num universa ejus opera, quæ diversis & locis & temporibus edidit, simul corrumpi potuerunt? *Hieronym. ad Pammach.*

notion of his own, in flat contradiction as is pretended to the author whom he personates? Thus much in general: I shall now examine the particular instances which Mr. *Wh.* has produced.

1st, He says, "The genuine *Origen* quotes "the text of St. *Luke* as it stood in the "copies of his age---that *there was darkness in the day time by an eclipse of the sun*. The other [*i. e.* the Latin *Origen*] "looks on that reading as an interpolation, "indeed as a dangerous interpolation made "by the enemies of christianity." p. 30.

This is a very great misrepresentation of *Origen*: For *Origen* never "quotes the "text of St. *Luke*" as having these words--*there was a darkness in the day-time by an eclipse of the sun*. *Origen* himself says so: but he does not cite it, as being "in the "copies of St. *Luke* in his age."

2^{dly}, Mr. *Wh.* proceeds, "The Latin *Origen* directly denies, that the evangelists "do so much as *name* the sun upon the "occasion; not only contrary to *Origen's* "own words, and citation of St. *Luke's* "gospel, but contrary to all the citations, "and MSS. of St. *Luke*, now known in the "world." *ibid.*

Here

Here indeed a difficulty arises,--which way *Origen* could say ^p, "that the evangelists had "not named the *sun* in that place, but only "that *there was darkness over all the earth*," --- When *St. Luke* had mentioned the *sun's being darkened*. But supposing this could not at all be accounted for; all that would follow is, that *Origen* forgot himself; that in his zeal to account for a difficulty, which would ^q "stagger a wise man who hears to every thing with reason and "judgment," he had been guilty of a mistake. And who is not sometimes faulty in this respect? Is every thing to be rejected as "spurious," where there are such inaccuracies as these? But perhaps if we consider *Origen* with candour, and take his words not too rigorously, he may not have been guilty of so great a mistake. What if he meant by -- "the evangelists" --- no more than *Matthew* and *Mark*? Will not his manner of expression a little before justify this interpretation of him? When he un-

^p Cui talia respondemus: primum quidem quod omnino Evangelistæ nec nominaverunt solem in isto loco, sed tantum quia tenebræ factæ sunt super omnem terram. *Origen. Tract., in Matt. 35^{tus}.*

^q Potens movere omnem hominem sapientem, qui --- omnia cum ratione & judicio audit. *ibid.*

dertook to answer the difficulty under consideration.--“How could a fact so wonderful as the darkness over all the world be pass’d over in such silence?”--- He begins thus: “We say then that *Matthew* and *Mark* have not said that there was an eclipse of the sun which happened at that time: no nor *Luke* according to the greatest part of the copies.” If therefore he meant no more than the *two former evangelists*, when he said, that “the evangelists had not named the sun in that place,” this solution of the difficulty might be born, rather than reject the whole as spurious. But I would not insist on this defence of *Origen*. What I am apt to think to be the more true state of the case is this. *Origen* supposes that somebody might say,
 “--- If the darkness did not proceed from
 “an eclipse of the sun, but from some

† Dicimus ergo, quod Matthæus & Marcus non dixerunt defectionem solis tunc factam fuisse: sed neque Lucas, secundam pleraque exemplaria. *ibid.*

‡ Dicit aliquis--- si non ex defectione solis factæ sunt tenebræ tunc super omnem terram Judæam et Hierusalem, sed ex altera causâ, ostende causam. Cui talia respondemus: primum quidem quod omnino Evangelistæ nec nominaverunt *solem* in isto loco; sed tantum quia tenebræ factæ sunt super omnem terram. Si enim tenebræ factæ sunt super omnem terram sole non nominato, sine dubio consequens est intelligere quasdam tenebrosissimas nubes--- concurrissæ super terram Judæam, & Hierusalem, ad cooperiendos radios solis: & ideo profundæ factæ sunt tenebræ a sextâ horâ usque ad nonam.

“ other

" other cause, tell us what that was,"
 To which he replies. " In the first place,
 " that the evangelists have not at all
 " named the sun, [he intended to say as
 " eclipsed] in that place, but only that
 " there was darkness over all the earth.
 " Now if the darkness was over all the
 " earth, without naming the sun," [*i. e.*
 as eclipsed,] " doubtless we are thence to un-
 " derstand that certain very dark clouds"
 concurred, " which obstructed the rays of
 " the sun," and thence came " the darkness
 " from the sixth hour to the ninth." What
 is there forc'd or unnatural in this inter-
 pretation? He is speaking of an *eclipse* of
 the sun, as not being named by neither
Matthew, *Mark*, nor *Luke*. The objection
 is, " if an *eclipse* of the sun be not the
 " cause of this darkness, what then can be
 " the cause? His answer is, an *eclipse of the*
sun not being named by the evangelists, you
 have no occasion to recur to that as the
 cause ; since great, thick, dark, clouds might
 cause it by their obstructing the rays of
 the sun, as much as the interposition of
 the moon could do. He meant therefore
 all along by, " the evangelists not naming
 " the

“the Sun,” their not naming it as *eclipsed*, since in his own solution by “dark clouds obstructing” the rays of the sun” he supposes that it may be *named* in the solution, as much as if he had occasion to mention an eclipse of the sun it self.

But let us suppose the worst, that no scheme will fully account for this passage in *Origen*, yet since we know what a sort of translator this was; one that was very mean, and had very little skill in that language from which he translated; one of very little sagacity, and that very rarely expressed fully the sentiment of his author; — an accidental blunder may justly be imputed to him, when at the same time two or three whole pages are not to be treated as spurious merely on account of a mistake, unless one had some evidence, some authority for it. ’Tis granted that these treatises on *Matthew* are *misera- bly mangled and deformed*: ’Tis granted that this translator, whoever he was, was as ignorant, and as destitute of sagacity in finding the sense of *Origen*, as Mr. *Wh.* from *Huetius* pretends. Yet I must observe, that *Huetius* no where intimates any thing concerning this particular 35th tract, but speaks in general concerning *all* the discourses on *Matthew*. He no where says that this particular tract is more corrupted than others. Unless there-

* Misere deformata sunt quæ Latinis editionibus continentur.
Huet. Origenianorum l. 3^{us} p. 243. v. p. 234.

fore some further evidence can be produced, his *general* charges against this translator will not amount to any proofs of spuriousness in this *particular* place.

Again: Allowing the charge of ignorance in this translator to be just; and allowing that he is quite destitute of *sagacity*, as *Huetius*, and from him Mr. *Whiston*, pretends: What will be the most probable consequence? Can anything shew greater *acuteness*, and greater *sagacity*, than the solution of the difficulty before us? Or does he *pass over the difficulty* as the manner " of this translator was? No: So far from it, that he very largely accounts for it. The charges therefore against this version rather prove that this was really *Origen's* own account of this matter, than his translator's. But to proceed.

3dly, Mr. *Wb.* observes, " that the genuine *Origen* cites, both in his *Greek* and the former " part of this *Latin* Version, *Pblegon*, as a real " and valuable heathen witness to the truth of " the extraordinary darkness, or eclipse of the sun " related in the gospels. But the other is rather busy in setting aside all such heathen testimonies."

The truth is, *Origen* in his books against *Celsus* is so far from citing *Pblegon* as " a real and

▪ Difficillima quæque quasi consulto prætermisit. *ibid.* p. 25.

" valuable

“valuable heathen witness to the truth of the “darkness mentioned in the gospels,” that ’tis impossible to conceive a witness cited, that speaks less to the purpose, than *Origen* with “^x all his abilities” makes *Phlegon* there to speak. And as to the Latin *Origen*, he owns freely that he knew of no “valuable heathen testimony” to any *Eclipse* at all at the precise time of our Saviour’s death. The one cites *Phlegon* as speaking of an eclipse *about* the time of Christ’s death; the other declares he knew no heathen that mentions the very particular darkness *at* his death.

It is not my desire nor design to aggravate any difficulties, but to remove them if possible: And when a *fair* and *rational* solution of any objection against the gospel is offered, I always with the utmost pleasure and satisfaction embrace it. And accordingly I take the solution of *Origen* to be very possible and probable. If any one is of opinion that the darkness at the passion arose from a real *Eclipse* of the sun, *i. e.* from an eclipse at the *fullmoon*, I think he ought fairly to answer the difficulty proposed by *Origen*. y

Suppose

^x Κατὰ τὸ διναλόν. *Orig. c. Cels. p. 96.*

^y Pone quia extra consuetudinem facta est illa defectio solis, in tempore non antiquo, sub principatu Romanorum; ita ut tenebræ ferent super omnem terram usque ad horam nonam: quomodo hoc factum tam mirabile nemo Grecorum, nemo Barbarorum factum conscripsit in tempore illo? maxime qui Chronica conscripserunt, & notaverunt sicubi tale aliquod novum factum est aliquando; sed soli hoc scripserant vestri auctores. Et *Phlegon*

" Suppose "says he," this eclipse of the Sun to
 " have been an extraordinary one, and that it hap-
 " pened not long ago, under the Roman govern-
 " ment, and this so that there was darkness over
 " all the world till the ninth hour : How cou'd a
 " fact so wonderful be pass'd over in such silence
 " as not to be mention'd by any *Greek* or *Bar-*
 " *barian* to have happened at that time? Espe-
 " cially by those that have written *Chronicles*,
 " and have taken notice whenever any thing
 " new was observed ? So that they are only your
 " own authors that write about it. *Pblegon*
 " indeed has written in his chronicles of an e-
 " clipse that happened under the government
 " of *Tiberius Cæsar* ; but he did not inform us
 " that it happened at the *fullmoon*." Thus far
 the allowed " genuin" *Origen* states the difficul-
 ty. If any one can answer it upon any other prin-
 ciples, except those which the *Latin Origen*
 maintains, he must produce some *Greek* or *Ro-*
man testimonies for it ; or he must prove by some
 medium or other that *Pblegon* really spoke of
 the darkness at the passion. This has not yet
 been done ; nor do I apprehend that it can be

quidem in Chronicis suis scripsit in principatu Tiberij Cæsaris fa-
 ctum ; sed non significavit in Luna plena hoc factum. *Orig. in*
Matt. Tract. 35th

done,

done, since Mr. *Whiston* has not been able to produce one argument to prove it.

It had been observed by me that *Africanus*, (who Mr. *Wh.* says “ was far from a credulous “ or careless writer, nay that he was the most “ *learned and accurate* chronologer of all anti- “ quity,” p. 29.) *Africanus*, I say, had asserted that Christ died in the 15th of *Tiberius*: And consequently, that if *Pblegon*’s eclipse happened at the same time that Christ died, then “ the most “ learned and accurate” *Africanus* must suppose *Pblegon*’s eclipse to have happened in the 4th year of the 201st olympiad, or in the 1st year of the 202^d. This consequence is not denied: Nor is the Year of *Africanus* pretended to be misrepresented by me; nay Mr. *Wh.* owns, that “ *Jerom*’s present copies say twice that *Africa- “ nus* believed the death of Christ to have been “ in the 15th of *Tiberius*.” How then is this objection answered by Mr. *Whiston*? Why truly; this, says he, “ is directly contrary to the entire “ *chronological reasoning* of the same *Africa- “ nus* — which clearly agrees to the ending *Da- “ niel*’s weeks at the 1st, 2^d, or 3^d year of the 202^d “ olympiad, and at the 16th, 17th, and 18th of “ *Tiberius*.” Be it so. It only follows that “ the “ most accurate” *Africanus* was in truth *inac- curate*. However: Which is the most proba-
ble

ble way of knowing, or of judging of any ones opinion in what year any fact happened ; — from following the evidence of his own express, precise, determinate words, affixing a fact to a certain year ; or from a long scheme of chronological reasoning, where there may be abundance of mistakes in every step? Especially if we add, what Mr. *Wh.* allows, that chronology was then “ but in its infancy,” p. 38. i. e. far from being exact.

But in the present case there is still something more peculiar. *Africanus* reckons the 15th of *Tiberius*, and the second year of the 202^d olympiad, and the year of Christ's death, all to coincide ; as *Jerom*² translates him ; and he pretends to give us^a his very words. *Eusebius* has preserved the same passage ; but what is very remarkable, he has omitted the year in

² *Ipsi macedones regnaverunt annis trecentis: atque exinde usque ad annum quintum decimum Tiberij Cæsaris quando passus est Christus. numerantur anni sexaginta — A vicesimo autem anno Artaxerxis regis usque ad Christum complentur Hebdomadæ septuaginta, juxta lunarem Hebræorum supputationem. — Nam a centesimo et quinto decimo anno regni Persarum, quando Artaxerxes rex ejusdem imperij vicesimum regni sui habebat annum, et erat Octogesimæ et tertiæ olympiadis annus quartus usque ad ducentessimam secundam olympiadem, et secundum ejusdem olympiadis annum, Tiberij que Cæsaris annum decimum quintum colliguntur anni quadringenti septuaginta quinque, qui faciunt annos Hebræicos quadringentos nonaginta juxta lunares (ut diximus) mentes. Africanus apud Hieronymum in Daniele.*

^a Hæc Africanus eisdem verbis quibus expressimus locutus est *ibid.*

which

which *Africanus* said that Christ died, viz. the 15th of *Tiberius*; and he makes ^b “the 2^d year “ of the 202^d olympiad, and the 16th of *Tiberius* to coincide.” Now, from the “chronological reasoning” of *Africanus*, we can not be certain whether Christ died in the 15th of *Tiberius*, as *Jerom* makes him say; or in the 16th, as *Eusebius* makes him say; or even in the 17th, as his “reasoning about the difference betwixt Solar and Lunar years may make it out. “The most accurate” *Africanus* therefore is certainly in this point inaccurate; and take him in what manner you will, as either *Eusebius*, or *Jerom* represents him, in none of these schemes will the death of Christ happen in the 4th year of the 202^d olympiad.

However, when I produced *Jerom*’s authority to prove that *Africanus* thought that Christ died in the 15th of *Tiberius*, unless there were some clear evidence that *Jerom* mistook or misrepresented him, it ought to be admitted sufficient to prove that *Africanus* thought *Pblegon*’s eclipse to have happened some time in the 4th year of the 201st, or in the 1st year of the 202^d olympiad. But my argument went further:

^b Ἀφ' αὐτῆς βασιλείας ἐποίησεν, καὶ Ὀλυμπιάδων ὀγδοηκοστῆς τρίτης εἰς τε αὐτὴν ἐπὶ τῶν τῶν χρόνων ἐν Ὀλυμπιάδων ἀναστροφῆς διυλίσσας ἐπὶ ὁδοῦ, τ. 6. εἰς τὴν καίσαρος ἡγεμονίας ἐπὶ ἐκαστῶν. African. apud Euseb. Demonstr. Evang. l. 8.

For I shewed that *Origen* was in the same opinion, or varied but little from it; and so was *Tertullian*, and *Lactantius*, and *Clemens Alexandrinus*; and, in general, this was the current notion of all the primitive christians, or all but one. It follows therefore that *Origen* and all the primitive christians, as well as *Africanus*, must conceive *Pblegon's* eclipse to have happened in that year, since they thought that Christ died in that year: And since it appears that in fact there was such an eclipse in that year, their testimonies are so many evidences, that *Pblegon* spoke of an eclipse in that year, and not of a darkness that happened three years after.

Mr. *Whiston's* next remark is about *Philoponus*. He grants that he "ascribes both the eclipse and the earthquake as taken out of *Pblegon* to the 2^d year of the 202^d olympiad;" but then, he adds "that he likewise *twice* ascribes them to the 4th year of that olympiad. So " that this *Philoponus* who has long been supposed to be the only old author who quoted "*Pblegon's* testimony as belonging to the 2^d year " of the 202^d olympiad, appears *now* to be of all " others the most undeniable witness, that it belonged to the 4th year of that olympiad, and to " no other: And all this while he appears not to " have

“ have taken his accounts from *Eusebius*, or *Jerom*, or the *Chronicon Alexandrinum*, but from *Phlegon*’s own olympiads then lying before him: as any one may see upon the perusal of his own words.” p. 33.

A stranger to Books of literature wou’d naturally think from this observation, that Mr. *Wh.* had now first made this discovery that *Philoponus* was inconsistent with himself in relation to *Phlegon*. What else can he mean by saying — “ so that this *Philoponus* who has long been supposed to be the only old author who quoted *Phlegon*’s testimony as belonging to the 2^d year of the 202^d olympiad, appears now to be of all others the most undeniable witness,” &c. Did not *Huetius* observe this long ago? Did not he propose to change the word δειξέτω into τελέειτω to reconcile *Philoponus* with himself and with other writers? This inconsistency then is not left to be now first found out by Mr. *Whiston*, but has long been observed by others.

However, what I would principally observe is, that in the place where *Philoponus* quotes *Phlegon*’s own words, there he has it — “ in the second year of the 202^d olympiad.” When he twice speaks of the fourth year of the 202^d olympiad, there he only gives us *Phlegon*’s sense, and not the words of *Phlegon* himself. And

from this observation I argue thus: If *Philoponus* "had *Pblegon's* olympiads then lying before "him," as Mr. *Wh.* says he had, then he read in *Pblegon*, not the *fourth* year, but the *second* year of the 202^d olympiad; for so he expressly cites *Pblegon's* words. If in reasoning about the year when Christ suffered, and in proving that that happened in the nineteenth of *Tiberius*, he speaks of *Pblegon's* eclipse as happening in the 4th year and not in the *second* — This only shews that *Philoponus* talked inconsistently; that he was for applying *Pblegon's* eclipse to the death of Christ as others had done before him; and that he was forcing *Pblegon's* testimony into his service, contrary to the express words of *Pblegon* which "then lay before him:" This it will prove; but not that *Philoponus* did not say what he has often been produced for saying.

Mr. *Whiston's* ninth observation is, "ALL the "antient testimonies already produced, both "Heathen and Christian agree, that within the "four years of the 202^d olympiad, just about "the year when *Jesus* of *Nazareth* was crucified, there was both a prodigious darkness, "or eclipse of the sun beginning at noon: And "that this darkness or eclipse was accompanied "with a great earthquake also; and this not "in *Judea* only, but in *Bitynia*." p. 35.

This

This observation is not strictly true: For *Maximus*, one of "the testimonies produced" by Mr. *Wh.* p. 19. says, that this eclipse was not at all in the 202^d, but in the 203^d olympiad; and consequently not "with in the *four* years" specified. And *Origen* denies expressly that the earthquake at the passion extended beyond *Judea* at farthest; and questions whether it reached beyond *Jerusalem* it self. But,

This was designed to introduce a remark upon my solution of a difficult passage in *Tertullian*, which I conceived to be hardly intelligible; and which I apprehended might be made easy, and very good sense, by inserting a negative particle in it. *Tertullian's* words are, speaking of the darkness of the passion — *Deliquium utique putaverunt, qui id quoque super Christo prædicatum non scierunt: ratione non deprehensa, negaverunt: Et tamen eum mundi casum relatum in arcanis vestris habetis. Apol. c. 21.* I proposed it as a mere conjecture, whether these words might not be read thus — *Deliquium utique [non] putaverunt, qui &c.* — and I supposed the sense to be, That those who knew nothing of a prophecy, that God designed to cause the sun at that time to be eclipsed, these did [not] imagine that that extraordinary darkness proceeded from an eclipse, whereas in reality it did proceed

from an eclipse: They not considering nor imagining the reason of such a preternatural darkness, denied that there cou'd be an eclipse, contrary to known fact, and to what their own accounts bear witness to. This interpretation makes good sense, and good reasoning: Whereas, as it stands in *Tertullian*, I question whether it be intelligible. For what is the meaning of these words — "Tis true that those who did
 " not know this was foretold concerning Christ,
 " thought it was an eclipse: But when they did
 " not understand how that cou'd be, they deni-
 " ed it: And yet you have that event related in
 " your archives." The difficulty is, how the *same* persons that at first *thought* it a natural eclipse, shou'd afterwards, when they were told that it was a preternatural eclipse, *deny* that there was *any eclipse at all*, either natural or preternatural.

But admit it to be intelligible, which I will not contend about, I cannot but make a remark upon the observation Mr. *Whiston* has made on this occasion. "Nor will antient testimonies," says he, "signify any thing, if it
 " may be allowed to change negatives into affirmatives, and affirmatives into negatives when
 " any *modern hypothesis* shall have occasion for
 " such a procedure. When any writers are driven
 " ven

“ven to such distresses, they need no further
 “confutation.” *p.* 36. The observation is certainly just in it self: But — does any thing I said about the *Acts of Pilate*, those manifest forgeries of the 2^d century; or does any thing I said about the eclipse mentioned by *Pblegon*, depend upon this hard sentence of *Tertullian*? No. Let *Tertullian* be understood in *any* sense, or let him be perfectly unintelligible; add a *non*, or let it alone; it does not affect any one point in this debate. The remark therefore is very unjust, as it stands applied to what I did; because my argument is exactly the same, whether you change the sentence or not; whether you read it as I translated it; or add the negative as I thought requisite to make the sense the better. It was a mere conjecture to make a dark sentence intelligible, but it had no relation to any one point in my hypothesis, or in what I contended for; nor had I occasion for “such a procedure” in order to establish what I was arguing about.

However, displeased as the good man is with me for presuming to “change an affirmative into a negative,” I cannot forbear observing that notwithstanding all his reproaches, within the compass of a few pages, he himself contends for inserting a *negative* into a sentence of *Paschasius Rhadbertus*. One wou’d think that a
 shame

shame was owed him, to be guilty of this very thing; to be forced to insert the very negative for which he reproach'd, and treated with so much disdain, the man whom he had first injured, and then cou'd not forgive. "He is speaking of a sentence in *Paschasius Rhadbertus*," Flegon *quidam Gentilis*, teste Origine, "*hoc factum narrat in chronicis suis, sub principatu Tiberii Cæsaris: nisi quod*[non] *significavit plena luna hoc factum.*" The coherence, here says Mr. *Wh.*" and the Latin of Origen above plainly requires the negative particle to be inserted as I have done p. 53." I think the coherence and the sense of *Tertullian* require the same negative particle to be inserted as I did; and I have just as much reason to insert it in my case, as Mr. *Wh.* has in his. The sense of the author must justify such insertions, and nothing else: For wherever it is done to serve an hypothesis, such writers never want any further confutation.

Bishop *Parker* in his demonstration of the divine authority of the christian religion, p. 230, has cited this passage of *Tertullian* in such a manner, as to make it indeed intelligible; but at the expence of all regard to his author. "*Eodem momento dies, medium orbem signante sole, subducta est. Deliquium putaverunt qui id quo-*"
" que

“ *que super Christum prædicatum non scierunt,*
 “ *et tamen eum mundi casum relatum in archi-*
 “ *vis vestris habetis.* At the very moment of
 “ our Saviour’s crucifixion the sun was darkned
 “ at midday, and tho they supposed it only an
 “ eclipse that knew nothing of its relation to the
 “ passion of Christ, yet this strange accident,
 “ be it what it will, you may find registred in
 “ your publick records.” The sense here is ve-
 ry good and perfectly intelligible; but he has
 omitted *Tertullian’s* words, *ratione non depre-*
bensa, negaverunt, which make the sentence so
 difficult. *Parker* probably took it from *Grotius*,
Matt. xxvii. 45, who has been guilty of the
 very same omission: But why *Grotius* omitted
 those words, I will not presume to guess. Only
 I must observe, that *Huetius* has been guilty
 of the very same omission in his *Demonst. E-*
vangelica; and since his time *Dominique de Co-*
lonia has omitted even more than *Parker*, or
Grotius, or *Huetius*. Such careless citation of
 authors can hardly be reconciled to truth or
 faithfulness; and shews how little trust is to be
 placed in quotations from any writer, whilst
 they are not the subject of any controversy; or
 else it shews that these great men saw the diffi-
 culty, and omitted what they did, because they
 cou’d not well tell how to account for it.

It is not my design to account for the darkness which happened at the time of our Saviour's passion. The fact is owned; not from what ecclesiastical historians have said upon this occasion (who knew no more of the matter than we do now;) but from the authority of the evangelists, who are properly *original testimonies*, and the only *authentick records* about it, and from whom the fathers had all that they knew about it. That which I contend for is, that the eclipse mentioned by *Ptolemy* has no manner of relation to it. Whether the passing of a comet betwixt us and the sun will account for the darkness at the passion may be affirmed or denied without affecting any thing that I have said. However, since Mr. *Wh.* pretends to account for what happened at *Xerxes's* march into *Europe*, and for that eclipse at *Augustus's* death, and for the darkness at the passion of our Saviour, by means of comets, "without the interposition of the moon," p. 38; and seems inclinable to produce "a third" (he shou'd have call'd it a fourth) "example of a solar eclipse not made by the interposition of the moon," viz. that of *Plutarch, De facie in orbe lunæ* p. 39. I cannot but recommend it to him to consider — how big the comet must be that cou'd cause a three hours darkness; —

How

How *near* it must come to the earth for us to be so long in its shadow; — what effects it must necessarily have produced upon the earth when it was thus long in conjunction with the sun; — what was its course that it mist us and the moon, and how we cou'd be so long as *three hours* in its shadow, when its motion must necessarily in that part of its orbit be exceeding quick. The biggest comets appear not usually bigger than stars of the first or second magnitude: And if such were to pass under the sun they wou'd not cause an eclipse, but appear as a spot. If any one were so big, or were to pass so very near the earth, as to be able to produce a *three hours* total darkness, the effects and consequences of such an appulse cou'd not but be very great, as every one that is versed in this sort of studies must know. And as Mr. *Whiston* himself has computed the encrease of tides in particular, upon the supposition of a small comet's approaching very near our earth; and has attempted to shew that in fact it caused an universal deluge formerly: It may deserve his thoughts whether a comet coming so near us wou'd not have drown'd a very great part of the habitable world at the time of the passion: Or whether the contrary wou'd not have happen'd to what the *testament of Levi* said, *viz.* whether instead of the

H

Waters

waters being dried up, there would not have been immensely great inundations.

But be this as it will; I can't but ask, in effect, with *Origen* — Whence is it that no *Grecian*, no *Roman*, has ever mentioned such a comet at this time, or such a strange eclipse caused by a comet? Whence is it, that those who have wrote *Chronicles*, and relate whatever is new and extraordinary, yet take no notice of such strange events? Or how is it, that those who have had occasion to treat of comets, and have mentioned those that happened a little *before*, and a little *after*, the time of the death of Christ, yet never speak of one *at* this particular time, notwithstanding its effects must be so very notorious?

Seneca tells us of a comet that appeared ^c after the death of *Demetrius* King of *Syria*, a little before the war in *Achaia*, which was not *less than the sun*: And gives a particular account of the manner of its appearance. This was about 148 years before Christ. He mentions likewise one in *Augustus's* time; another in *Claudius's* reign; and another in *Nero's*, and

^c Post mortem *Demetrii* *Syriae* regis, cujus *Demetrius* et *Antiochus* liberi fuerunt, paulo ante *Achaicum* bellum cometes effulsit, non minor sole. Primo igneus ac rubicundus orbis fuit, clarumque lumen emittens, quanto vinceret noctem. Deinde paulatim magnitudo ejus districta est, et evanuit claritas. Novissime autem totus intercidit. *Sen. Nat. Quæst. c. 5.*

one too just after the death of ^d *Julius Cæsar*. Is it not unaccountable that he shou'd mention a comet in every reign, except the one of *Tiberius*, wherein Mr. *Wh.* imagines one to have appear'd the most remarkable of all, and which produced the most remarkable effects? How comes it that not only *Seneca* does not mention any comet in *Tiberius's* reign, but no other author ever mentions any? The accurate *Stanislaus Lubieniecius*, in his history of comets, takes notice of all that happened in those times, and does not forget to place among them the star that appeared at our Saviour's birth: He takes notice of that at *Augustus's* death: But then cou'd find no other till the 40th year of Christ, after the death of *Tiberius Cæsar*. Is it possible that a comet cou'd happen, and occasion so long a darkness as *three hours*, and yet no body shou'd mention, or hint at, such an appearance, at the same time that they take notice of every little comet, and usually make it a Prognostic of some great good or evil?

I do not enquire into the truth of what *Seneca* says, that a comet appeared ^e *not less than the sun*: *Seneca* did not see it; nor is every

^d Nec est quod putemus eundem visum esse sub *Claudio* quem sub *Augusto* vidimus; nec hunc qui sub *Nerone* Cæsare apparuit, et cometis detraxit infamiam, illi similem fuisse qui post necem *divi Julii* veneris ludis genetricis circa undecimam horam diei emerfit. *Seneca*, lib. 7. Natural. quæstion. c. 17.

^e Non minor sole. *ibid.* c. 15.

report instantly to be credited, even when you cannot absolutely deny it, tho this I think may justly be denied. *Hevelius* observed a comet in the year 1652 that appeared *no less than the moon*, as my author says, ^f tho in light and brightness much inferior to the moon; I suppose he meant it, with its coma around it, and not the nucleus of the comet distinct from its coma. Supposing now a comet appeared at the death of Christ, and one of the largest magnitude; yet still one of these cou'd not cause a *three hours* total darkness, but the eclipse it self must be in some proportion to our common eclipses, and that would be a great many hours longer, and must have been seen all over the world. The eclipse which happened *A. D.* 29, and which I contend that *Phlegon* speaks of, lasted at most not above two minutes, and was visible over a tract of 4400 miles. Must not an eclipse of three hours have been seen much farther, and have been the wonder of the whole world? Could it then be passed over in silence by *all* writers in the world, even by those who have taken notice of the smallest appearance of this kind? Mr. *Wb.* may believe it, if he can.

To make the notion of an eclipse by a comet at the passion the more probable, Mr.

^f Keil's *Introductio ad veram Astronomiam.* p. 234.

Wh. speaks with some assurance concerning two total eclipses without the interposition of the moon: The one a little "before the death of *Augustus*, related by *Dio* and *Jerom*; the other when *Xerxes* was coming over the *Hellepont*."

As to the first, had it been occasion'd by a comet, 'tis impossible that *Dio* could have expressed himself in that manner. For giving an account of the prodigies which happened some time before *Augustus*'s death, he says, "The sun was totally eclipsed, AND a great part of the heaven seemed to be on fire, AND bloody comets appeared," &c. Now

There is no absolute necessity that all these prodigies shou'd happen just at the time, or even *very little before Augustus*'s death. Neither is it impossible that *Dio* and *Jerom* may be mistaken; since no considerable eclipse happened at *Rome* within eight years of his death. Nor do *Dio*, and *Suetonius*, and *Jerom* agree in all the same prodigies: *Suetonius* not mentioning any eclipse at all; *Jerom* mentioning not any thing but the eclipse, and passing by both the *Aurora borealis* and the effects of the thunder. But whether *Dio* and *Jerom* were mistaken as to the eclipse or not; had the eclipse which *Dio* [and *Xiphilin* too] speaks of been

been by the interposition of a comet, he must have alter'd his language, and not have said — “ The sun was eclips'd, AND bloody comets appeared ” — But — the sun was eclipsed by the interposition of a comet — or in some such manner.

As to that phaenomenon mentioned by *Herodotus* when *Xerxes* began to march from *Sardis*, 'tis generally agreed that he march'd from home on the 4th year of the 74th olympiad, and having winter'd at *Sardis*, in the following spring *A. P. 7. 4234.* he march'd forward for *Greece*. The 75th olympiad beginning after midsummer, if there happened any remarkable eclipse in that spring which preceded the 75th olympiad that would account for *Herodotus's* story. But as in truth the eclipse on the 19th of *April* happened the year before, or *A. P. 7. 4233*, chronologers have been at a loss to account for this phenomenon. Now suppose it can't be accounted for at all : Or suppose a mistake in *Herodotus* in making that to happen after his march from *Sardis*, which really happened after his march from *Susa* : Or suppose one cannot assign any just solution : Yet still it may be no difficult matter to know what can *not* be the cause : and if it be true that an *Eclipse* in fact happened upon *Xerxes's* march from *Sardis*, I can much easier
account

account for his expedition a year sooner than is commonly conceived, than suppose an imaginary comet to do what no comet ever was known to do. *Pliny* indeed speaks of a comet & much about the battle of *Salamis*, which is called *Cerantias*, from its resemblance in shape to a horn: But this species (if it may be called so) of comets were all very small; and could not eclipse the sun. Whatever therefore was the cause of this sudden darkness, it could *not* be a comet; and they who think it a common natural eclipse are, in virtue of that supposition, obliged to make *Xerxes's* march that year that this eclipse happened.

But as to what is suggested by Mr. *Wh.* from *Plutarch*, it may fairly be accounted for from a real eclipse which happened *A. D.* 59. which *Plutarch* might very well remember, it being so remarkable; and he being then 9 or 10 years old: especially since upon computation 'tis found to be just as he says, *presently after noon*, it being at two a clock *P. M.* on the last day of *April*.

However whether I could account for these passages in old authors or not, is nothing to the point in hand. Suppose that astronomers had

2. *Kerantias cornu speciem habet, qualis fuit cum Græcia apud Salamina depugnavit, Plin. l. 2. c. 25.*

not been able to find out any eclipses that would answer *Plutarch's* words exactly, — is an hypothesis instantly to be invented, without one instance known; or one author's intimation of any such fact; or one direct proof; or so much as one calculation to make it look like possible, or probable? I cannot conceive that any real service is done to christianity by treating improbabilities as high probabilities; or by maintaining what is not perhaps absolutely impossible as if it were a real fact. Nor do I suppose it any great advantage to a good cause to imagine that old authors can never be mistaken as moderns sometimes are; much less good is done, nay a great evil is done, by representing as "authentick records and accounts," and as "of sacred authority and genuine," the fictions and follies of no body knows who.

It signifies but little to take notice of such little inaccuracies in Mr. *Whiston's* performance as the following. When he cites *Eusebius's Chronicon*, he says — "Over against the third year of the 202^d olympiad, and in the 18th of *Tiberius*," p. 17, the words he cites are placed. Whereas every one's eyes will shew him that the citation in *Eusebius* is placed not "over against the *third*," but over against the *fourth* year of the 202^d olympiad, just as I printed

printed them in my dissertation p. 42. So again,

When he comes to cite St. *Jerom's* version of the chronicon of *Eusebius*, he says "*Jerom's* chronicon of *Eusebius* over against the same year with *Eusebius*." p. 20. This is likewise a mistake: For in *Jerom's Chronicon* it stands over against the 3^d year of the 202^d olympiad; whereas in *Eusebius* tis placed under the fourth year. *vid. Dissertation*, p. 49, 51.

It may likewise be observed, that amongst the testimonies produced for to vindicate *Phelegon* and his eclipse, St. *Chrysostom* is produced p. 22. who says, ^f "That this darkness was NOT an eclipse, but an effect of the anger and displeasure of God, is manifest; not only from the darkness it self, but from the time it continued, three hours. Now an eclipse happens in an instant of time." &c.

Amongst the other "original testimonies" mentioned by Mr. *Wh. Orosius* is produced, who wrote his history towards the beginning of the fifth Century. And when he comes to make his observations on him, tis really amazing to see how little he himself gives credit to such a testimony. *Orosius* is speaking concern-

^f "Οτι τὸ σκότος ἐκεῖ, ὃ οὐκ ἦν ἕκλειψις, ἀλλ' ὀργὴ τε καὶ ἀσυνάντησις, οὐκ ἐπέτευθεν μόνον ὅλον ἡν, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τοῦ καιροῦ. τρεῖς γὰρ ὥρες παρέμεινεν. ἡ δὲ ἕκλειψις καιροῦ γίνεσθαι ἐν μιᾷ ῥοπῇ.

ing some particular generosity of *Tiberius*, “and
 “ says, that he made those cities free from tri-
 “ bute and gave them their liberty which had
 “ been thrown down by THIS earthquake,” ap-
 plying this to the earthquake at the passion. *Lip-*
sius's remark upon this (and I think *Lipsius* was
 bigot enough in all conscience) is this — *Bonum*
Orosium quam fugit ratio, qui hunc tremorem
terræ ad tempus refert mortui nostri servatoris?
Quod nos quidem scimus totis XIV annis posteri-
us fuisse. Scilicet egebant hoc fuco sacræ litte-
ræ! *Lipsius* in *Tacit. Annal. l. 2.*

In order to justify *Orosius*, *Mr. Wh.* says,
 “ Tis possible that *Orosius* might take part of
 “ this account from *Tacitus*. Tis possible also
 “ that *Orosius* might mistake eighteen or twen-
 “ ty years, if he did take it from *Tacitus*; and
 “ might ascribe that to the end of *Tiberius's*
 “ reign, which the other ascribes nearer to the
 “ beginning. — Tis equally possible, *Orosius*
 “ might have his account from other authors,
 “ and might not make such a gross mistake of
 “ 18 or 20 years time.”

Why *Mr. Wh.* supposes any such authors, or
 such a possible mistake as that of eighteen or
 twenty years, is somewhat unaccountable, when
 we have no hints of any such authors except
Pblegon be alluded to; nor can there be a mi-
 stake

stake of so many years, since no body that looks into *Tacitus* can think this "generosity of *Tiberius*" was sooner than the year when *Cælius* and *Pomponius* were consuls, *i. e.* several years after the beginning of *Tiberius*'s reign; and no one carries the death of Christ later than the 18th or 19th of *Tiberius*. How then is it possible to "make such a gross mistake as that of "eighteen or twenty years?" Again;

One cannot forbear taking notice what a sort of "original testimony" or "authentick account" this of *Orosius* is. For Mr. *Whiston* himself cannot say more in his favour than this, that "'tis possible" he may be right in what he says: Then from this possibility he presently infers a probability that *Orosius*'s account is true. Whereas in reality, 'tis so far improbable, that it does not appear any where, that there was any earthquake at the time of the passion, out of *Judea*, which destroyed any cities in *Asia*, or elsewhere: It does not appear that *Tiberius* continued his liberality in rebuilding cities in any of the provinces: No *Greek*, no *Latin* books mention any grounds to believe that there was any such generosity shewn to any city in *Asia*, at that time: And consequently *Orosius*'s testimony is very improbable, if not absolutely false.

I am not willing to enter into the stories mentioned by travellers relating to places in the Holy land. They that relate them very seldom believe the accounts to be true; nor do they desire that their readers should. They are the traditionary romances of the place, and generally are related as such. If Mr. *Whiston* can believe them to be true; I wou'd not willingly disturb him in the enjoyment of any satisfaction. But I must observe, that the fables that are told in all places, and much more such as tend to encourage and promote superstition, would make a man sick of the follies and weakness of some well meaning ignorant persons: And for my own part, I cannot but fear that the lies, and fabulous stories, that have been told in order to promote religion, have too often had the contrary effect to what they were designed for: and instead of making now and then one christian of a deist, have made one thousand deists of such as had been christians.

Having thus examined what has been observed by Mr. *Wh.* in relation to *Phlegon's* eclipse; I shall next set down, what I principally had in view, an exacter computation of the eclipse *A. D.* 29, than that which Mr. *Whiston* was so kind as to communicate to me. And when I have made some particular remarks on that, I shall

shall dismiss all thoughts of a further examination of this subject.

I observed in the beginning, that I had received from a gentleman, to whom I was then a perfect stranger, a computation of that eclipse which I conceived *Pblegon* to mean. I must in this place acknowledge my particular obligations to him: And every one that is curious in this sort of disquisitions, and loves truth for truth's sake, must do the same.

His computation stands thus; and I have his leave to publish it to the world.

Anno.

		☉ M. Motion				Mean Anom.			
		s	o	'	"	s	o	'	"
Anno.	1	9	7	53	10	6	29	53	40
	20	0	0	9	4	11	29	48	4
	8	0	0	3	37	11	29	55	13
Novem ^r	23	10	22	18	24	10	22	17	27
Hours	22	0	0	54	13	0	0	54	13
		8 1 18 28				5 22 48 37			
Equa. Sub.		14 52				2 8 30 Apogm			
☉ Long.		8 1 3 36							
		☽ M. Motion				Apog.			
		s	o	'	"	s	o	'	"
	1	4	2	3	55	9	12	7	5
	20	4	13	34	5	3	3	50	15
	8	11	11	25	37	10	25	32	7
Novem ^r	23	11	18	40	51	1	6	25	50
Hours	22	0	12	4	42	6 8			
		7 27 49 10				0 18 1 25			
Equa.		+ 1 32				- 2 49			
2 ^d —3 55		7 27 50 42				0 17 58 36			
3—0 14		- 4 9				+ 11 50 44			
		7 27 46 33				0 29 49 20			
4 th		+ 3 16 8				☽ 7 27 46 33			
		8 1 2 41				6 27 57 13			
6 th		- 1 30							
		8 1 1 11				Mean Anom.			
Reduction		+ 2 6				Excen. 5706			
☽ Ecliptick		8 1 3 17				☽ Horiz ^l			
Latitude		N — 45 7				} Paral ^r 61 17			
						} Semid ^r 16 47			
						☉ Semidiam ^r 16 24			

" From

" From the above calculation I make this
 " eclipse to have been almost total both at *Jerusalem*
 " and at *Cairo* in *Egypt*. At *Cairo*
 " I make the middle to have happened just at
 " noon; but at *Jerusalem* not till above a quar-
 " ter of an hour after-noon.

" I reckon the whole *total* shadow to have
 " passed between *Cairo* in *Egypt*, and *Jerusa-*
 " *lem*, and that in the center of the shadow the
 " sun was totally darkned about *two minutes*;
 " so that very probably *Venus*, *Mars*, *Mercu-*
 " *ry*, the bright star of the *Harp*, *Antares*, *Spica*
 " *Virginis*, and *Arcturus*, might have been
 " seen, if not some others that are but of the 2^d
 " magnitude."

Thus far this very ingenious and exact gentleman.

Within a very few days after the receipt of this computation, that accurate astronomer Mr. *Hodgson*, mathematical master of *Christ's Hospital*, was so kind as to communicate to me his calculation of the same eclipse; and I find most of the same stars mentioned, and that the greatest obscuration, according to him, at *Jerusalem*, was at 12^h 24^m, and that the duration of total darkness was 1' 31".

Dr. *Halley*, who is never to be named without particular honour, "having carefully re-
 " vised

"vised a former calculation which he had made
 "of this eclipse, supposing the difference of me-
 "ridians $2^h 23'$, and the latitude of *Jerusalem*
 " 32° (both which are very near the truth) he
 "finds that this eclipse was total at *Jerusalem*,
 "or near it, about 11 minutes after noon, and
 "that where it was central at that time, the
 "darkness was not less than $1' 40''$."

Now what I would remark from these fe-
 veral computations is, that the difference of the
 times at which the total darkness happened,
 and during which it lasted, is very easy to be
 accounted for, but is of no consequence in the
 present debate betwixt Mr. *Whiston* and my self,
 since all of them agree that this eclipse was soon
after twelve, (just as *Pblegon* said,) and not as
 Mr. *Wh.* said at *nine* in the morning. They
 each computed this eclipse by different tables:
 And as they all agree that it was at past *twelve*,
 it may not be hard to see how this eclipse at
 the *sixth* hour, came to be confounded with the
 darkness at the *sixth hour* in the evangelists.

And now having these calculations, upon
 which the reader may securely depend, one may
 proceed to examine Mr. *Whiston's* remarks upon
 this eclipse.

It appears then *1st*, by calculation, that the
 total eclipse in the *first* year of the 202^d olym-
 piad

piad was at its height within a few minutes after twelve at noon, *i. e.* it was exactly as *Pblegon* described it in the *sixth* hour. The principal difficulty therefore which attended my former account is now absolutely removed: And every character which *Pblegon* has mentioned will agree to this eclipse.

2dly, Mr. *Wh.* very inconsiderately asserts, that there is "an agreement of all the antients, who relate *Pblegon's* words, as belonging to this very year, *i. e.* 4th of the 202^d olympiad." *p.* 32, and 46. *Africanus* and *Origen* necessarily suppose *Pblegon's* eclipse to be in the 1st year of the 202^d olympiad. *Philoponus* who had *Pblegon* lying before him (as Mr. *Wh.* says *p.* 33.) says expressly 'twas in the *second* year. *Jerom* places it under the *third* year, tho he translates it as if it were in the original, *in the fourth* year, and *Maximus* says that *Pblegon's* eclipse was in the 203^d olympiad. The year therefore being thus uncertain; and *Pblegon* speaking of an *eclipse of the sun* and saying that the *stars could be seen*; without any circumstance of the *full moon*, or any thing preternatural; and even christian writers denying that the darkness at the passion could be called an *eclipse*, (*v. 2 Chrysostom*) hence I conclude that *Pblegon* meant a

ἡ ὥρα τῆς σκόλης ἐκείνης, ἢ οὐκ ἔνι ἡμερίσιν δὴ λου ἔνι. Chrys. stom.

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real

real natural eclipse, and particularly a total one which happened at the very hour he mentions in the 1st year of the 202^d olympiad.

3dly, Mr. *Wb*'s second character is that "*Pblegon's* eclipse was *the greatest that ever was known before*; which greatness, says he, must consist in the length of duration. Now the darkness at the passion was no less than three hours; whereas the intire duration of all natural solar eclipses is seldom much above two hours, and the duration of the darkness very rarely so much as five minutes. And as for *Kepler's* eclipse, if it were at all total, along the central shadow, which is not certain, it could be so but a very *small part of a minute*."

p. 47. I reply, 1st, That if you will take these words rigidly, *the greatest of any known before*—then this will prove too much. For when a thing was *never known before*, it is absurd to call it the most remarkable, or greatest of *any KNOWN BEFORE*. And therefore *Philoponus*, who reasons justly from this principle, that *there never had been such an eclipse*, has added a negative particle to this citation, and reads it *μεγίστη τῶν [ἐκ] ἐγνωσμένων πρότερον*, designing to intimate that such a one had *not* been known before, tho manifestly corrupting *Pblegon*. Hence it appears, that *Pblegon* meant a *real eclipse*

eclipse. 2dly, *Phlegon* may mean no more than what *Jerom* understood him to mean, *magna & excellens inter omnes*, i. e. a very great and remarkable one; in the same manner as *Homer* speaks of *Ajax Oileus*

Εγχείη ἐκέκασο Πανέλληνας καὶ Ἀχαιῆς.

Il. B. 530.

i. e. as *Dr. Clarke* very justly observes, *non necessario indicat hunc plane et omnino omnibus superiorem fuisse, sed bastæ mittendæ peritia inter omnes eximium.* And such was this eclipse upon all suppositions. But,

3dly, Supposing even this interpretation not to be allowed, yet, I must observe, that if you look backwards from this eclipse which happened *A. D.* 29, for 90 years together, you will meet with but *two* of any particular note in *Asia Minor*. One on the 14th of *January* 38 years before *Christ*, the total darkness of which could not be more than 8" or 10". The other was as great as this which *Phlegon* mentions, where it was *central*; but it was only *so* in the northern parts of *Asia* about the latitude of 42°. There were no other total eclipses in those parts, whose shadow passed between the *Black Sea* and the southern parts of *Egypt*. So that this eclipse might pro-

perly be styled the *greatest of any known before* or as remarkable as any; not that there *never was* a greater in no part of the world, but not a greater *known by any body alive*, as the words may signify; or, it may be, *taken notice of*, by any body particularly before that time.

In the eclipse said to be foretold by *Thales*, *A. P. J. 4113. Ant. Ch. 601.* where Bishop *Usher* and Dr. *Prideaux* and others fix the *Lydian War*, the sun could not be eclipsed more than 8 or 9 digits in any part of *Asia*. In that eclipse which Sir *Isaac Newton* makes to be foretold by *Thales*, *Ante Ch. 585*, in which he places the war betwixt the *Lydians* and *Medes*, and which happened *May the 28th*, it was not total in any part of *Asia*, till a few minutes before sunset, if at all. From whence it has been conjectured, that the famous battle betwixt the aforesaid nations really happened in the year *An. Ch. 603.* in which year there was an eclipse of the sun, both central and total, in *Asia*, on the 18th of *May* between 11 and 12, in the lat. of 40 north, and long. 40 to the east of *London*. But then I do not find this eclipse *taken notice of* by any. The eclipse *A. P. J. 4283*, upon *August 3^d* could not have been total any where. That *A. P. J. 4310*, on *September 3^d* was no where total. The eclipse which happened *Au-*
gust

gust 15th A. P. 7. 14404, was indeed a total
 eclipse; and where the central shadow passed,
 the obscuration was near as long again, as in
 that which *Pblegon* mentions; and in course
 this was, in it self, a bigger than that which
 happened *Anno 29*. But as its shadow passed di-
 rectly to the south of *Asia* and *Greece*, 'tis a questi-
 on whether it might be total at all *there*. That
 which happened *February 11. A. A. Ch. 217*,
 was not near total in any part of *Asia*. That
July 19, A. A. Ch. 104, was no where total. So
 that I do not find any eclipse taken notice of, that
 happened in *Asia*, or there about, for above six
 hundred years that was so large as this which
Pblegon mentions: And but one taken notice of a-
 ny where that exceeded his. Now it is not enough
 to find out by *computation* an eclipse, which, in
 some part or other of the world, was *greater*
 than this which *Pblegon* speaks of: But it must
 be one that some preceding writer, in fact, men-
 tions; and if such a one can be produced, it will
 only prove, either that *Pblegon* was mistaken
 in calling that *A. 29*, absolutely *the greatest of*
any known or taken notice of before; or, that
 he had not himself taken notice of any one so
 great. I should be glad to have the curious
 search into this fact: For hitherto, as I said, I
 have

have been able to find not above one, at most, *taken notice of* so great as this of *Pblegon*.

4thly, Mr. *Wh.* says that this eclipse was total "but a very small part of a minute". p. 47. In this he is mistaken again. The gentleman who first sent me the anonymous letter, and to whom I am obliged for so many calculations, says, that it "continued about two minutes." Mr. *Hodgson* says 'twas 1 minute 31 seconds. Dr. *Hally* says 1' 40".

5thly, Another thing in *Pblegon's* eclipse remarkable, is — *The day became night and the stars appeared.* Mr. *Wh.* remarks, "That as "to *Kepler's* eclipse, i. e. in the 1st year of the "202^d olympiad, when by calculation *Jupiter* "was below the horizon, it is a great question "whether any one star excepting *Venus*, which "is frequently seen in the day time also, could "be at all visible." Now if my author informs me right, for I readily own my self not a judge in this case, *Mars*, *Venus*, *Mercury*, *Antares*, *Arcturus*, and *Spica Virginis*, were to be seen, if not the two brightest stars in *Libra*, and the brightest in the neck of the *Serpent*. Mr. *Hodgson* says, the planets *Mars*, *Mercury*, and five of the most eminent fixed stars *Arcturus*, *Antares*, *Iyra*, *Regulus*, and *Spica Virginis* were visible. So that this character very fully agrees to

to the eclipse assigned, and Mr. *Whiston's* assertion is entirely groundless.

6thly, "*Phlegon's* eclipse began, says Mr. *Wh.* at the 6th hour of the day or noon, as did "the darkness at our Saviour's passion. But "*Kepler's* eclipse about 8 or 9 a clock in the "morning: Which 3 or 4 hours — is a very "great difference," p. 48. It appears now from much exacter calculation, that in all this Mr. *Wh.* is mistaken: For it began before noon; it was dark quite just after 12; it continued near 2 minutes quite dark; and by that means the stars abovementioned were easily visible.

Lastly, He says "*Phlegon's* eclipse was accompanied with an earthquake to *Bithynia*," p. 48. But how does it appear that the earthquake at the passion was any where but in *Judea*? It might seem unaccountable that Mr. *Wh.* should take for granted so palpably the thing in question, as to say the earthquake at the passion extended beyond *Judea*, or should assert that it "went over cross the middle of the *Roman* empire, from *Great Britain* thro *Judea* to *Babylon*, or the contrary, p. 40." Or that he should suppose that it reach'd even to *Nice*. He has not one testimony for this except *Phlegon*, or such as derive what they say from *Phlegon*; and I think it has been sufficiently proved,
that

that *Pblegon's* eclipse was *A. D.* 29, in *November*, and not at the time of the passion.

And now, from this mistake of Mr. *Whiston's*, I will not instantly conclude him "not fit to determine in points of either chronology or astronomy," *p.* 35. Whatever my abilities are, which I freely acknowledge to be not great, yet be they more or less, truth I love, and truth I constantly search after, and make truth the study of my life; and I hope nothing will ever have influence enough to make me swerve from that. It was in this disposition that I suggested to Dr. *Clarke*, that that famous passage in *Pblegon* which was cited by him, and had been so generally cited by other learned men as an attestation to the darkness at our Saviour's passion, was without sufficient evidence: That it was impossible to be *proved* to relate to it: And that therefore it ought to be omitted in a book where the evidences of natural and revealed religion were so excellently and judiciously stated.

There is one thing further in this piece of Mr. *Wh.* that deserves a slight remark, and that is, That notwithstanding he has wrote so many things against, and has been so bitterly severe on every body, and on Dr. *Clarke* in particular, for imagining a *double sense of prophecies*, yet in this book, he himself has inconsistently fallen

en

en into the same notion. Speaking of the prophecy of *Amos*, viii. 9, 10, 11. *It shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day, &c.* "This prophecy, he says, belongs *primarily* to an eclipse in *Amos's* own time, but to such a one as was designed to be exactly *parallel* to that before us, and so may well enough be *applied* to it." p. 44. Now what is it that those who plead for *double senses of prophecies* mean, except this very thing, that they belong *primarily* to one thing, but are *designed to be exactly parallel* to another?

What is the difference betwixt this, and the saying, as others have said, and have been wrote against by Mr. *Wh.* for saying, that "many prophecies, which tho' they may have a *prior* and *immediate* reference to some *nearer* events, yet by the Spirit of God may have been directed to be uttered in such words as may even more properly and more justly be applied to the *great event which providence had in view*, than to the *intermediate* event which God designed as only a pledge or earnest of the other." If the one be in an error for arguing thus about the prophecies of the old testament, I fear Mr. *Wh.* will find it

L difficult

difficult to clear himself of the very same mistakes in the present case.

And now to conclude, with a solution of that problem which Mr. *Wb.* thinks so very difficult and insoluble, "How that great and judicious person Dr. *Clarke* should be persuaded to give up *Phlegon's* testimony?" I think Mr. *Wb.* himself did, in effect, solve it, when he observed that Dr. *Clarke* had no *violent passions* at all, no *strong inclinations*. Whenever a truth was shewn to Dr. *Clarke*, he was ready and willing, as every honest man ought to be, to embrace it in the love of truth. If the question were put concerning a man of *very violent passions*, of *very strong inclinations*, of one that is warm in his nature, and that could not bear contradiction — What would he do, in case he had once maintained any error? — The answer I think would be, That the odds are infinite against such a one, that he would never give up an opinion once maintain'd, how groundless soever it was: That he would assert positively, and be deaf to conviction: That he would call any testimony that first struck his imagination, "original evidence"; and any forgery an "authentick record."



APPENDIX.



IN the Dissertation, when I was considering the circumstances of *F. Grélon's* narration concerning the missionaries of *China*, and their request to “the mathematicians of *Europe*, that they would take the pains to examine, whether in the 32^d year of our Lord, about the month of *April* there was any eclipse of the sun, and whether it could happen *naturally*.” By way of reply I said — “Take it either way; if there was upon computation a *natural* eclipse of the sun at that time, such an eclipse could not possibly be to the purpose, because the eclipse at

“ the time of our Saviour’s death must have
 “ been at the *full moon*, and therefore not natu-
 “ ral, nor computable. If there *were* such ane-
 “ clipse as did happen *preternaturally*; then all
 “ the mathematicians of *Europe* could not com-
 “ pute it.” p. 91.


’Tis probable, I think, that the missionaries were desirous that the mathematicians of *Europe* would take the pains to compute the eclipses of that year : And then, if it appeared that there was *no eclipse at all* about *April, A. D. 32*, then they should have “ this very plausible argument to convince the *Cbinese* ;” viz. The darkness of the passion was the same with the eclipse mentioned in their books; that they themselves had taken notice of this miraculous circumstance at the death of *Jesus*; and consequently it was true; attested even by such as were either perfect strangers, or open adversaries to christianity.

This I now take to be the missionaries design, and this the end of their request. The mischief is, this “ very plausible argument” designed for the *conviction* of the poor *Cbinese*, supposes, that in records of long standing, there is no mistake either originally, or in transcripts; it supposes the *Cbinese* astronomers at that time not to have been mistaken; it sup-
 poses

poses that there was such an eclipse from the authority of their books; it supposes it at the *full moon* at the same time that their histories say that it was at the *new moon*; it supposes the missionaries to contradict their histories in the very thing they cite their histories for; and it supposes that *Christ* died in a year in which he did not die. What strange arguments and arts do missionaries make use of as “plausible” ones, to make converts to a cause that stands in need of nothing but truth and honesty, and a fair impartial hearing!



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